

THE

HISTORIAN

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

Welcome to October, a time of ghosts, goblins, and things that "go bump in the night"! The 15th Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Friday, October 31, 2007, at Cedar Rest Cemetery in the 200 block of South Second Street in Bay Saint Louis. The fun begins at 5:30 P. M. and runs until 8:00 P. M.

Everyone is invited to assemble at the main entrance to the Cedar Rest Cemetery for an exciting, informative, and historical tour. Guides will lead visitors through the cemetery, and Historical Society members, portraying local citizens buried there, will recount interesting aspects of the citizens' lives. Admission to the tour is free, but donations are accepted and used to maintain the gravesites and headstones in the cemetery.

After the tour everyone is invited to the Lobrano House around the corner at 108 Cue St. for punch, cookies, and other treats.

As is our usual custom, we will not have a luncheon this month so that we can devote all of our energies to the Halloween Tour.



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October 2008



Cedar Rest Cemetery at 200 South Second St., Bay Saint Louis, MS

History of the Annual Cemetery Tour

Reprinted from the October 2004
edition of
The Historian
updated and edited by
Eddie Coleman

Sixteen years ago in 1993 on a very cold Halloween night, the Hancock County Historical Society members began a tradition that is the highlight of Halloween celebrations in Bay Saint Louis and all of Hancock County to this day.

Originated to discourage vandalism of the cemetery by mis-

chievous ghosts and goblins, the event also has three other objectives. They are to preserve and teach the history of the area, to serve as the October function of the society, and most importantly, to accept donations to finance the restoration of graves and headstones in the Cedar Rest Cemetery.

The first year over four hundred people took the tour through the cemetery, guided by Society volunteers. Boy Scout Troop 220 volunteers had lined the pathways with luminaries, sand filled bags with candles, to light the touring path.

Along the way groups of ten visitors stopped to listen to citizens from the past tell their stories.

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
Linda-Lou Nelson, Publisher

Published monthly by the
**HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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MAILING ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 3356

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39521

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

108 Cue Street

Telephone/Fax [228] 467-4090

Email address:

hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net

Website:

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LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY

10:00AM — 3:00PM

Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

Whenever possible the portrayer was a descendant of the character, dressed in period costume and assuming the persona of the deceased.

In 1994, member Dorothea Martin began portraying the "Nearly Departed," sitting at the gates of Cedar Rest. At her side was a basket for the donations given by visitors. Dorothea continued this ritual until she was forced to move to California to be with relatives after Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home in Bay Saint Louis. Even from that distance, she retained her membership in, devotion to, and interest in the Historical Society. In April 2007 Dorothea joined the "Dearly Departed."

Certain Society members have their favorite characters to play. Patt Cucullu has portrayed Kate Lobrano, the Lobrano House namesake, nearly every year since the tour began, and Paul LaViolette has portrayed Midshipman William P. Canby, a visiting ghost, for many years. Paul even returns from "Katrina exile" in Pennsylvania to play the character.

Always held on Halloween night regardless of its day of the week, the Cemetery Tour has been held yearly since its beginning in

1993 except in 2005 because of Hurricane Katrina. Last year over one thousand people made the tour, and each year it has gotten bigger and better. The tour has become an eagerly awaited event not only in Bay Saint Louis and Hancock County but also throughout the entire Gulf Coast. If you have never attended or even if you attend each year, treat yourself this Halloween night, and join us. The fun begins at 5:30 P. M. and continues until 8:00 P. M. After you have completed the tour, stop by the Lobrano House around the corner at 108 Cue St. for cookies, chips, punch, and other goodies.

St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church

By
Scott Bagley

This is the seventh in a series of articles on historic churches in Hancock County. This month we take a look at St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church in Bay St. Louis. Its eighty year history of serving its community is both colorful and interesting.





St. Rose
de Lima
Catholic Church
Located at 302
South Necaise
Avenue in
Bay Saint Louis,
MS.

Any discussion of the history of St. Rose must begin in the 19th Century when the first school for African-Americans in Bay St. Louis opened its doors in 1868. This school, originally administered by Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church, began in a two-story white building located on Second Street where Holy Trinity School now stands. In 1885 the Sisters of St. Joseph were asked by Our Lady of the Gulf to take over administration of the school. For over thirty-five years the Sisters admirably managed the school, but in 1924 they found that taking care of both this school and St. Joseph Academy was more than they could handle. Accordingly this same year the Divine Word Missionaries took over responsibility for the school.

The Divine Word Missionaries (SVD's) were a group of religious priests and brothers with a German heritage. The group, having originally established a seminary in Illinois in 1895, moved to Greenville, Mississippi, in 1921. Here they established a seminary to train African-American men for the priesthood and religious life when few, if any, seminaries would accept them. However, because of the negative racial climate in

Greenville, the seminary, known as St. Augustine, was almost immediately relocated to Bay St. Louis. Along with training African-American men for a religious life, the SVD's also took over the responsibility of educating the African-American children.

Within a couple of years, it was apparent to the SVD's that a separate parish and school were needed for African-American Catholics in Bay St. Louis. Fr. Francis Baltes, head of the school at the time, was instrumental in petitioning the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSPs) for help in establishing a separate parish. At his request, four sisters arrived in Bay St. Louis in 1924, and one of them, Mother Catherine Drexel, was particularly helpful in this project.

About this same time, the school was relocated to property purchased by the SVD's on Necaise Avenue. On August 28, 1925, the new school was officially named St. Rose de Lima and formally made independent of Our Lady of the Gulf. That same year construction began on the church that would also be known as St. Rose de Lima. Records reflect that

Joseph Labat was the general contractor.

On November 14, 1926, the church was officially dedicated by Bishop Richard O. Gerow along with eleven other priests. At this dedication service, forty-two people took their first Holy Communion and were confirmed the same day. The parish of St. Rose de Lima was indeed a reality.

Over the next decades the school and church continued to thrive, adding additional facilities. Fr. Holken oversaw the construction of a new gymnasium in 1935. A new grammar school was built in 1955, and another new school building was added in 1959. Integration of the local school systems resulted in the last high school and eighth grade graduation ceremonies in 1968. The lower school (K-6 grade) continued until 1975, however, when St. Rose de Lima School joined Our Lady of the Gulf to establish Bay Catholic Elementary.

In spite of the demise of the school, the church continued to thrive as the church home for primarily African-American families. As the church neared its sixty-fifth anniversary in 1991, the parishioners felt the need to renovate the church. Fr. Ken Hamilton used the renovation in part to reacquaint St. Rose parishioners with themselves as a parish and the parish with its ethnic heritage. Mainly local craftsmen did the carpentry, electrical work, and painting of the church. A new altar, ambo, tabernacle stand, and credence table were all constructed from local trees as well as some locally found driftwood. Each piece was carefully chosen for its singular purpose and was required to blend harmoniously with the central theme of the artistic renovation. In addition to the renovation, the reacquaint program also included families' sharing their family histo-



ries during Mass and developing artwork depicting the ethnic make-up of the parish while illustrating the basic concept of the Catholic faith.

The focal point of the renovation is a mural on the rear and side walls of the sanctuary. This mural was painted by artist Auseklis Ozols and Kat Fitzpatrick, his student and St. Rose parishioner. The dramatic mural represents both the Crucifixion and Resurrection with the figure of Christ floating free of the bonds and burdens of earth before a huge oak tree, the Cross. In the artist's words, "[T]he tree has witnessed all, weathered hurricanes, lost branches, lived through many seasons, human and natural. Births and deaths, days and nights, love and hate, summers and winters it has known. It is the true Cross."

The seventy-fifth anniversary in 2001 also brought additional structural renovation. New air conditioning and sound systems were installed as well as a new baptismal font made by the potter Talle Johnson.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 impacted many parish families but spared the church to a great extent. Under the leadership of Fr. Sebastian, the church established a Hurricane Task Force that eventually coordinated helping over five hundred

families with some form of repairs with the help of over five thousand volunteers from throughout the United States and generous contributions from many sources. In spite of the hurricane, St. Rose was still able to complete its planned parish center to be used for church functions and other activities in the community. Opening in 2006 the

The time is nigh to elect board members to serve from January 2009 through December 2011. Final selections will be made in elections at the November meeting.

Our nominating committee will submit its recommendations, but we are also asking the general membership for nominations. If you would like to serve or to recommend someone, please call 467-4090 or nominate from the floor at the November meeting. The offices being filled this year are treasurer, secretary, and membership. A special "thank you" goes to those who have served on the board during these past two years.

Altar mural
painted by
Auseklis
Ozols and
Kat
Fitzpatrick
at St. Rose de
Lima
Catholic
Church

new center was named the Holy Spirit Center.

St. Rose de Lima has been an important and unique part of the history of this community, and it holds a special place in the hearts of many people. As this area continues to recover and rebuild, St. Rose no doubt continue to provide a strong spiritual presence for its residents.

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Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

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An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Katrina Cookbook
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A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

Mississippi's No-Man's Land
By Marco Giardino, Ph.D., and Russell Guerin (\$10.95)
The story of the Koch family, early settlers of Hancock County, and their experiences during the Civil War, based on their letters

One Dog, Two Dogs, Three Dogs, Four...
By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)
Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Sink or Be Sunk
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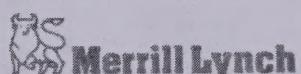
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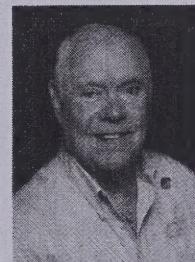
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